

MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscripts

*Words! Mere words! How terrible they
were! How clear, and vivid, and cruel!
One could not escape from them. And yet
what a subtle magic there was in them!*

—Oscar Wilde
The Picture of Dorian Gray

Butler University
Indianapolis, Indiana

Volume 65, No. 2
Spring 1997

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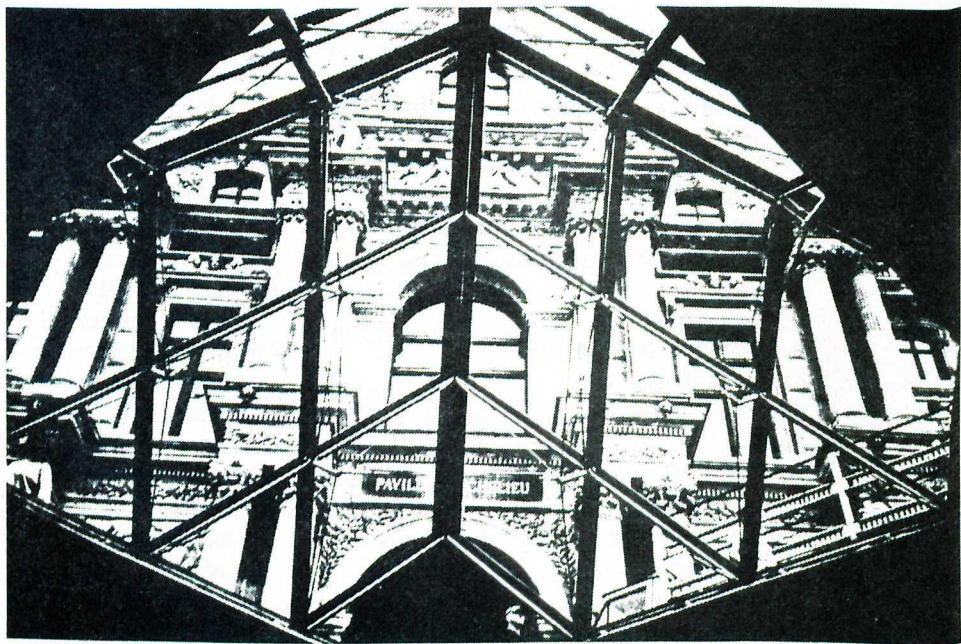
* Denotes members of Sigma Tau Delta,
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Ann Hriunak

On 12th and 4th Street
for Myra Shapiro

The degrees of separation grow together
When you meet a man

Who has a marvelous friend in 6L,
When your daughter lives in 7G.

It's amazing! To think that
When your child drops a dish

Or a spoon that speaks through wood and
Glue below to someone who knows

The man who sits at your table,
You smile again at how ivy grows up

Windows to remind the city
Of its boundless roots.

Neil Diamante

convention null where?

You can only walk so far
in long skirts that is what they demand
in lieu holding back the
length of you the
full outward longitude of who
withdrew beneath the stride you
really oughta be confined
to fleeing me
laboriously seeing
the seem ever lengthen
lengthen
lengthen the rhythm of the
bipedal plantar pace knee
against knee thigh to thigh the I
of you who wants to be the skirt thwarting
back the knee free

Chris Burkhardt



Mari Kozlowski

Miracle Diet

I am not your cow not your grade A size three object of
the auction block worth my weight in beef

This said as I pass by without a glance at the mirror at the
toaster at the window as I walk in at the puddles on the ground
as I make my way through an apparently increasingly narrow
world

I will not be painted not be squeezed not be shorn not be
limited by physical conformity. I will walk barefoot and I will
not dye my hair

unless it is my own edict but what edict is that? free of culture?

BUT I WILL NOT BE EATEN! I am not for your consumption
edible-visual-societal I am a free product of the free world and
of utmost value and never really free at all...

...led from one pasture to another grazing and lowing and
lowing and grazing and who knows but I was taught how to say
moo?

Sarah J. Gardner

**Anuttara-Samyaksambodhi* in Antiquity
(The Vaticination of Universal Emancipation)**

A jubilant journey to ancient Egypt
to consolidate with Atlantean sages
to learn the truth of "primitive" crypt
paravidya that transcends the modern ages

because thou believe thou art intelligent
with thy fatuous formal education
but verily thou art vulgarly ignorant
of the integral components of edification

thou often boast of thy superior "civilization"
while posing at pride's pernicious pinnacle
but thou never receive the divine revelation
leaving thy fragile brain perplexed and cynical

thou place thy avidyic faith in a false fable
that oppressive pretense termed "progress"
to separate sacred and mundane thou art able
only to nourish human absurdity and distress

fabricating the novel practical mythology
with thy nescient "rational" suppositions
and the malicious miracles of technology
from thy feigned enculturated eruditions

thy inept institutions and ludicrous laws
leading the dreary delusions of democracy
The Beast 666 will plunge his puissant paws
into thy perpetual prevarication and hypocrisy

“Do what thou wilt” is the only adequate solution
the paramount property of pure holistic science
the necessary principle for governmental evolution
Thelemic Apocalypse guarantees its appliance

every man and every woman is a veritable star
emerging from the vast void to fulfill volition
but the proletariat has failed to penetrate thus far
fettered by conformity to sovereign submission

Ian Michael Sigmon

a bitching midget

a big midget is becoming angry
and he is bitching.
a bitching midget has reached that
vague stage
where a big midget might otherwise
be called a petite person.
“where do you draw the line?”
a big bitching midget is asking.
“where do you draw the line?”

a man on stilts is saying,
“i have no time for interrogation.”
lo, there is something about those stilts.
the big midget is no longer bitching.

a chase is ensuing,
but the big midget is not running
because of his midget legs.
a big midget is again bitching.

the man on stilts is beginning to bitch,
“it is hurting to run on stilts.”
a big midget is now saying,
“i have no time for bitching.”

the actors reconcile.

Christopher W. Barnes

The Dhyana Decision

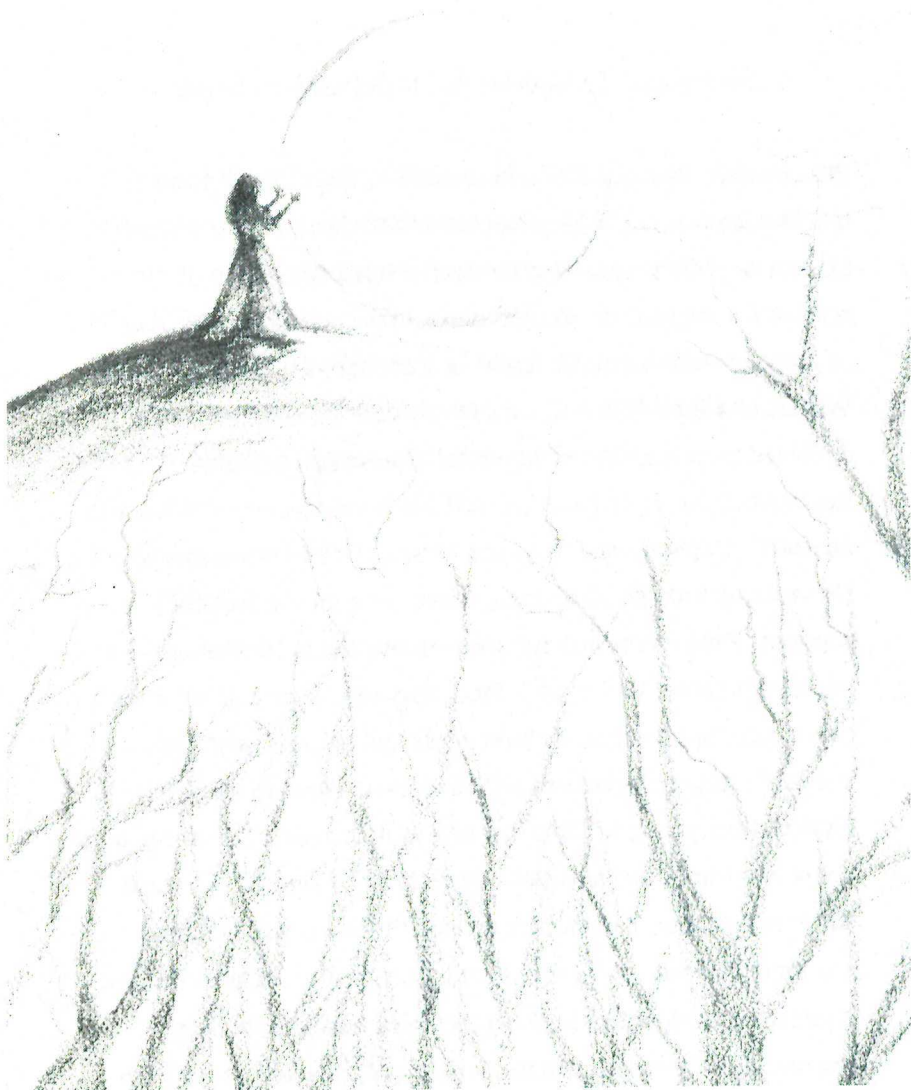
Still the modern monkey mind
practice placid pranayama
liberation through lokottara
the demise of delusion
elimination of confusion.

Happiness is a pretense
modeled by propriety
manipulated by society
a mere perplexity in time.

Be wary of what comes easy
experience pure perpetual bliss
Atman and Brahman are tantamount
Yoga is paramount metamorphosis.

Emancipation expunges karma
Samadhi is only one summit.
Only you know if you are
conscious of your fourth toe.

Julie Renae Knose



Fani Anagnostou

Change and Tradition: An Independent Study

White noise. Anxious thoughts that the X-Files instilled and how the modern world became post-modern in a forward march kind of way. The signal was the end of innocence through science and capitalism. Something not progress—the opposite of progress—Planet of the Apes—a stationary condition after the War. It was fun while it lasted said the cartoon character as he devolved back into the sea life form from which we came. Imperialism has ended and neostuff has been instituted. What's neostuff? Euphoria and Saddam Hussein in bad news abroad. Downsizing brought about more -isms—a term for the 90s, I suppose. Production with robotics—part-time at McDonalds—whichever comes first, right? Prosperity on the sunrise signifies two major modern ages: cultural -isms and cultural post -isms. But don't forget plagiarisms and Madonna. How do they fit in? Exploitation, perhaps. Does any of this make sense? Don't you know that triumph in advertising equals MTV—the X-Men and the time machine. Symbolism ends with Beavis and Butthead and kinetoscopes—Industrial Revolution again? Jackson Pollack created the world when he flung the color wheel at the white canvas. And somewhere in there, diseased geniuses suffer from

a mental epidemic—the Black Death of this decade. Sources of progress equals social distress, suicide. Self-murder is an urban problem. Boomerangs zoom upward and onward and yet read regression—full throttle forward to life in the freezing ocean—the sunset, the dying light of the world darkened in an eclipse. Hoping for a miraculous invention—a catastrophic effect skeptically known as progress—the trees and air are gone. Mars awaits.

Christina L. Smith

send: IN%"IM@MARS.EDU"
to generation XXX

I want to be a fern. edu. jesus send mail.
I don't think I'm going home tonight.

www. / . / . /

because it is there. edu

(hal)

solid as a boxer.
but much more dangerous.
on the mind. send. mail.
by blowing kisses.

get out of line.
subject abject.
search for: safety net.

cyber sex. spot.
chasing the mouse.
a phallic modem. edu.

a substitute for flesh.

www. / - . / .

in. / . out .
interstellar space
between commitment.
I'm going to go. to. bed

Neil Diamante

Dream

I was talking on the
phone in the middle of a
cornfield as snowflakes
pounded to the ground at my feet.
Hammering through the grainy
afternoon sunlight
the flakes melted
on my face and
dripped down my cheeks
dressed in red rouge
and black mascara.

With each
polluted drip of the
melted snow, I caught
a word from the person
on the other end
of the phone line.

I knew it was God.

But the dead cornstalk leaves
screamed at the pelting flakes
with every strike
and I was deafened by the battle.

He continued
to spout the message
that I needed
to hear but
it was only

static snaking through the airwaves.

I couldn't seem to make God
understand that the connection
was bad—

But He knew already
and didn't care.

With the click of
disconnection

the snow stopped.

I trembled with contempt
in the middle of the
snow-covered cornfield.

Christina L. Smith



Chad A. Gard

Wy-oming Now?

Wy-
oming
Now?

The rocks are calling you
chanting in rhythmic pulsation
like the powerful waves of an earthquake,
courses through the earth.

They, united in choir,
are singing your name.

Sculptures in stone
continually carved by the force
of battering water, caressing wind,
the rock's inner spirit evolves into form.

For only one moment in the evolution of the land,
the molding of clay hardened over time,
we will walk on the same surface
the potter's wheel of the earth's spirit,

as our ancestors.

Laura E. Hamlin



Fani Anagnostou

**A Secret Place in the Woods
That Only the Natives Know About**

I have a pet wolf
no bigger than my palm
who curls up on my belly at night to sleep.

I try not to disturb him
for he hates to be bothered
with the memory of grass

and dirt.
He told me one night of
an Indian Mound. His Indian Mound.

He skulked there where the dry
February breeze coerced
last Autumn's leaves to dance
in ceremonial firelight.

They scraped and fluttered
gyrating into the hollow of the dirt hill
and he watched the ghosts

of Shawnee Indians
crumble into his earth.

My wolf whines at the mention of the beechwoods
and the maples and the oaks
and he hates the grass that no longer grows under their
impenetrable roof.

The wolf on my belly often growls
deep in his throat
at the approaching dawn.

Christina L. Smith

burned birthright

There was a
hole in the sky
because they refused
to believe in
dragons and wizards

pixie-dust
now swept and incinerated

even old stocking has hole
from hungry moth

she's a little curly-haired scientist
in a tremendous limitless laboratory
she notes all her observations
like the "X" on the floor
and her own drool.

her astonished smile is the
only evidence of her note-taking

i screamed when i saw spinning globes
and dreamed horribly of giant demons
with big red shoes
and watched the über-sheep dissolve, gurgles
and explode

while the serene yet formidable face of mary magdalene
melted
into a vehement skeletal banshee wail
with retribution for
everyone who continued to stare and
pledge allegiance to their jesus in khakis.

mary magdalene didn't visit me that night
and the elongated faces of the profane disciples
never showed up dripping on me either
and i was happy.

big dogs, jingle bells,
light sabers, little white ducks,
little white spots, muffing men,
bullfrogs and butterflies, old V8s,
featherbeds, tractor sheds,
coconut heads, puddle jumpers,
brooder houses, corn cribs, pole cribs,
and raunchy nurses all scamper about
in the caves below
my landfill.

when i spun in the rope swing,
and burned up my little blue
cowboy boots
scraping circles in the ground

they were all leaping about
in the garden
chasing away cicadas and bumblebees.

Matthew Gordon

Say What You Mean

If I hadn't stayed home from school that day—and I almost didn't because Mom couldn't see how a fourteen-year-old's cramps could be *that* bad—if I hadn't stayed home, then Mrs. Pfefferberg might have moved out without anybody knowing why. Mom told me I should take three Advil and quit complaining, that after I'd had two kids and passed the age of forty, then I'd *really* know what cramps were. But I think she felt kind of bad about it, too. It was only the third time I'd had my period at all, and I was still kind of freaked out about the whole thing, so she said I could stay home if I wanted to, and she'd call me over her lunch hour. Dad had already left for work, which was probably a good thing because female talk like that made him uncomfortable, and my brother Barry was away at college or he'd have been teasing me about it.

So I stayed home, curled up on the sofa in the living room with a heating pad pressed against my stomach and my knees pulled up to curl around it. I was flipping between a soap opera and a talk show, not one of those real sleazy ones, either. They were doing make-overs, which I thought was kind of cool since the girls were about my age, only they all started out dressed like hookers and ended up looking like models. There was a wedding going on on the soap, so I was flipping back and forth during commercials so I wouldn't miss too much of either.

I think it must have been about ten-thirty when I noticed that something was going on next door at the Pfefferbergs'. Right next to the TV we've got one of those big sliding glass doors that leads out

onto our deck, and if you go down the deck steps and across the yard, you end up over at the Pfefferbergs. So I had a pretty good view of their driveway and their garage and a little bit of the front porch. Anyway, it was probably about ten-thirty because the soap opera was having this really long commercial when I saw a Jeep Cherokee pull up at the Pfefferbergs', and some lady I'd never seen before got out. The Jeep was red, and this lady was wearing red, too—a sweatshirt, I think. I saw her get out of the Jeep and go around to the porch. She knocked on the door and went inside, but I didn't see anybody let her in.

Now I probably should have realized something was up then because the Pfefferbergs don't usually have people over at all, let alone in the morning. Mr. Pfefferberg works at this place in the city that makes air conditioners, and he usually leaves about seven forty-five. I know because I'm usually waiting for the bus when he pulls out of his driveway, and he never waves or honks or anything, just turns out of the driveway without using his turn signal.

Mrs. Pfefferberg works up at the flower shop on Pinto Street, and she's a tramp. Not a real one, that's just what I heard Mom call her once when she didn't think I could hear. "Carmen Pfefferberg's a tramp," she said, her hands sunk into the soap bubbles as she washed the dishes. Dad asked how she could tell, and Mom told him not to be stupid. "Look at how she dresses and the cheap way she dyes her hair. I know for a fact that Gary met her in some bar, and they only knew each other three weeks before they got married."

It's true that Mrs. Pfefferberg does have really blond hair with these dark roots that kind of make her look like a skunk only in reverse. She's got big boobs, and she's skinny, but she dresses cool, not slutty or anything. Not like those girls on TV. One of them was wearing thigh-high patent leather boots and a see-through top with a black bra underneath and blue fingernail polish, and I've never seen Mrs. Pfefferberg dressed like that. I think Mom doesn't like her because she goes into work after noon and gets home by five, and she and Mr. Pfefferberg go out a lot at night. Plus she sunbathes in their backyard, and I don't think Mom likes that very much either.

Maybe ten minutes went by, and then I noticed that the lady in the red sweatshirt had come back outside with a big box and was putting it in the back of her Jeep. Mrs. Pfefferberg came outside then too, and she was wearing jeans and a silky shirt with stars and moons all over it. She had her hair pulled back in one of those gold clips that don't work in my hair because it's too short. She was carrying a box, too, and she handed it to the first lady who heaved it into the Jeep.

The boxes were taped shut so I couldn't tell what was inside. Maybe it was the girls on TV that made me think this, but I thought maybe Mrs. Pfefferberg was getting rid of some old clothes, donating them to the Salvation Army or something. I thought that if she was doing that, I'd like to have some because, like I said, her clothes are cool. They probably wouldn't have fit me anyway, but I bet I could have grown into them.

But then they went back into the house and came out with armloads of clothes, and I began to think that the boxes must have

had something else in them instead. There were a lot of clothes, and I wondered if Mrs. Pfefferberg was getting rid of her whole wardrobe, like maybe she's had a make-over like the girls on the talk show and was getting a whole new look.

Then another truck pulled into the Pfefferberg's driveway, a pick-up truck this time. A man was driving this one. He was a big guy with a gut and these really round arms, and he was wearing khaki pants that looked like they were about to fall off. Mrs. Pfefferberg came out of the house with a grocery bag overflowing with shoes, and when she saw the man, she put the bag down and gave him a big hug. She didn't kiss him or anything, which was good because that probably would have grossed me out, but she just kind of hung onto him like she was a little kid and he was a teddy bear. The big guy stood there and patted her back like maybe he felt kind of awkward, and the other lady came out of the house carrying a suitcase and stood waiting on the porch.

I guess I realized that Mrs. Pfefferberg was moving out then. The first lady's Jeep was pretty full by then, so the three of them started loading things in the guy's truck, bigger stuff like chairs and more boxes and even a microwave. I'd moved to sit in front of the window so I could get a better look at what they were doing. It was more interesting than the soap opera, and all the girls had had their make-overs already. I think I figured that both of the Pfefferbergs were moving. It didn't occur to me that it was weird for them to be moving out while Mr. Pfefferberg was at work or that there wasn't a moving van, just a Jeep and a pick-up truck.

It took them about half an hour, which was pretty good considering the amount of stuff they loaded up. A lot of it didn't seem to be



Fani Anagnostou

packed real good, like the shoes falling out of the bag and the clothes just kind of tossed in. I wondered if the stuff in the boxes was packed any better or if things were just sort of thrown in there, too.

And then all of a sudden Mrs. Pfefferberg was coming across the yard toward our house, watching carefully where she stepped because the grass was wet and she was wearing white Keds. I quick got back up on the couch and put the heating pad back on my lap, so I don't think she saw I was watching. I pretended like the show on TV was really great, like I was really into it so when she came up on the deck and tapped at the door, I acted all surprised.

"I didn't expect anybody to be home," she said, and she kind of laughed. She was wearing little gold earrings shaped like dolphins and a lot of rings like she always did. "You sick?"

"Yeah. I mean, sort of." She looked past me, like to see if there was anybody else home, and she saw the heating pad and the bottle of Advil on the coffee table.

"Oh." She sighed and folded her arms. "It sucks, doesn't it?"

I knew she was talking about the cramps, so I nodded. "Yeah. It sucks." Mom thinks "sucks" is a crude word and doesn't like me to use it. But she's also always telling me that I don't talk clear enough, not like I mumble but like she doesn't get what I'm trying to say. Like when I say that school is OK or my teachers are all right. "That doesn't tell me anything," she says. "Say what you mean. I'm not a mind reader."

So when I said that having cramps sucks, that's what I meant. I don't think you can say it any more clearly, and if sucks is crude,

then so are cramps. And I think Mrs. Pfefferberg understood that.

"When I was in school," Mrs. Pfefferberg said, rubbing one hand along the sleeve of her shiny shirt, "they taught us that having your period meant you were a woman. Like it was some big prize or something. Some kind of trophy. 'Congratulations, you're all grown up now. Here you go.' They still do that?"

I told her they gave us pamphlets now, pamphlets with titles like, "Today a Girl, Tomorrow a Woman" and "Growing Up Me," and she thought that was pretty funny. She even laughed, which I think is what made me feel like it was OK to ask her if she and Mr. Pfefferberg were moving out.

She stopped laughing then, but she didn't look mad or sad, just kind of calm. "Nope. Just me."

"How much you want to bet she'll end up walking out on him?" Mom told Dad that same night over the soapy dishes. "She'll leave him for some other man. You watch."

And I was watching, watching Mrs. Pfefferberg loading a bunch of stuff into two trucks and listening to her tell me she was moving out. But to be with that big guy? With the lady in the red sweatshirt maybe? I'd seen another talk show once where that happened, where a man was all upset because his wife had left him for another woman.

I didn't ask her why she was leaving. I really wanted to, but I got shy again all of a sudden, and I didn't. Mrs. Pfefferberg held out an envelope to me and said how it had gotten delivered to their house by mistake two days ago, and she'd forgotten to bring it by. "I figure if I leave it here for Gary to bring, you'll

never get it." She gave the envelope to me. It was from Visa, a bill maybe, maybe just an ad. "I don't know if it's important or not, but you make sure your mom gets it, OK?" I told her I would, and she smiled again. "I know you will."

The big guy called out, "Hey, Carmen," and Mrs. Pfefferberg turned. "You don't want these dishes to go in the truck, do you? They'll get broke for sure, bumpin' around back there."

"They're packed with newspaper," Mrs. Pfefferberg shouted back. "They'll be fine."

"They'll get broke," the man repeated. "Better put 'em in your car," and he set the box down on the ground.

Mrs. Pfefferberg turned back to me and shook her head. "You got an older brother, right?" I nodded. "Does he always nag you like that?"

"That's your brother?" I looked back across the yard to where the guy was climbing up into the back of the pick-up. His pants were slipping, and I could see his butt crack.

"Mmm hmm. My brother Jim." She pointed. "And that's my sister-in-law. Not Jim's wife, though. My other brother's. She drove down from Lansing to help." The lady in the red sweatshirt was slamming the back door of the Jeep and brushing her hands on her jeans.

Mrs. Pfefferberg reached up and brushed back a piece of her yellow hair. "Well, I'd better head on back. Gary said he'd give me till five, but I told him I could be out in three hours."

I felt like I ought to say something then, but I didn't know what. See ya? Have a good life? Hope the dishes don't break? It all sounded stupid.

Mrs. Pfefferberg put out her hand like she wanted to shake mine. Her rings pressed into my fingers, and the gold felt cool and smooth. I don't think I'd ever shook anybody's hand before, and it seemed weird, but it made me feel kind of grown-up, too.

Then she let go of my hand and said, "I'll tell you something they don't put in those pamphlets. There are five billion people in this world. Did you know that? Five billion. Now some people think that they can treat other people like crap because there are five billion more people out there to choose from. They're the kind thinks that one's as good as any other. You just remember that there's somebody out there who'll appreciate you the way they should. You just hang on and hang back. You know what I mean?" I didn't exactly, but I nodded anyway. "You can afford to be choosy."

I think, looking back on it, that she was talking about Mr. Pfefferberg. Later, I ran that whole conversation back through my head, after the Jeep and the pick-up had pulled away with Mrs. Pfefferberg in her white Camaro behind them. I don't know if Mr. Pfefferberg was cheating on her or if her was bad to her in another way, but I know that's why she left. Not because there was somebody else, but because the somebody she had was the wrong one.

Mrs. Pfefferberg only said one other thing. She was half-way down the deck steps, and I was just sliding the door shut, when she said, "Look, tell your mom I'm sorry I didn't bring the letter over yesterday. I would have, but it slipped my mind. Tell her," she said, "that I'm sorry we didn't get to know each other. I don't have a lot of cookie recipes to swap or anything, but, well, she

seems like a real nice lady.” She waved. “And try drinking some 7-Up for those cramps. It sometimes helps.”

Mom tried calling on her lunch hour like she promised to. “Didn’t you hear the phone?” she wanted to know when she got home. I told her I was in the bathroom.

I’d heard the phone, but I didn’t answer it. I didn’t want to talk to her then because I knew I’d end up telling her about Mrs. Pfefferberg moving out, and she’d say, “It just goes to show you,” or something like that. And it did show me something, but not the something it showed her. So when the phone rang, I turned up the TV real loud so I couldn’t hear it and only turned it down again when I was sure the ringing had stopped.

Christina L. Cass

Bather
marble

Jean Antoine Houdin 1782

It is these hardened lines, and not so much
the distance from me to you
or the casual others passing your
chiseled beauty that holds us back;
and it is not fair that so many allow themselves

careless glances upon your nakedness,
for there is no coat to shield you from their cold looks,
no silk garment to cover your polished pale loins,
and no callused heart to protect your pride.
But what is it that hides beneath the layers?
Your bowing head is shy and sad,

but there is nothing to be ashamed of! You cannot help
but be on display,
and is rightfully so, with grace and patience
as enduring as yours. Yet my love
will not endure as long as you. I feel you in there,
and all I can do is sit, as you do, holding in my
yearning for you like stone.

Chris Burkhardt



Fani Anagnostou

Why We Really Work in Food

the apron tied around her waist
surrounds her like a frock
of mustard and ketchup
and ranch dressing—the white trash fav.
oh how tasteful.
the shoes—sold at a most refined discount shop
on highway 41—
smell like old bacon and sausage—
eau de pork, saks, one would assume.

the tag on his grand, off-white, not quite Tide-clean lapel
reads manager—proudly—boldfaced—MANAGER.
a vinyl belt, tags still hidden, untorn, beneath the simulated
gold buckle,
hitches up the shit-brown, polyester stylers covering
the legs that never see sun.

“over easy?” she cries, less than hopeful that little johnny will
reply,
at the family of 12 at table 11.
“duh” they seem to sing together, like a church choir—
but they’d actually tip less if it were sunday—
jesus gives more than 10%
spells her favorite button.
“over easy? eggs over easy?”
repetition is the only chloroform she carries
in her lint and small change-laden pockets.
someone recalls english and returns from helen keller land—
revived by hunger.

"thank you" he says pseudo-sincerely to an elderly couple
with hashbrowns streaked across their golf polos
as he rings tickets and collects strawberry-preserved
dollars.

"come again" he says—and glances at her.

she pivots and grins coyly.
he chuckles and meets her sweaty gaze
winking across the orange and green striped carpet at her
as she carries a tray full of syrupy, slobbered-on dishes.
she notices her lipstick on his collar
as he turns to follow her into the kitchen
to see what's cookin'
out back
behind the dumpster.

Michelle Liffick



Fani Anagnostou

Food for the Gods

Passion lost its
 meaning with
 the creation of
 Starbursts.

Now it's a
 fruity flavor.

And I still
 have not met the boy
 who would pick
 passion fruit
 over
 cherry.

Michelle Liffick

Thieving in Writings

She carried her purse at her side
in a library after coming out of the bathroom

and that told me two things,
one of them being she didn't trust any of us.

Chris Burkhardt

Losing Weight

there's an old man
lookin' at me;
I bet he's
watchin' me walk
all 'round
this track
(ten laps to go).
I catch his eye
out of the corner
of mine, won't move
his head; he looks
like he just
remembered his wife;
and he's talkin'
to his kids;
I'm so tired.
I'm so flattered.
wish I looked
better than sweat
and frizzy hair.
wish I looked
better in those
size twelves.

Michelle Byrd

Clowns and Assassins

A man wanted to be a boy.
So he went into a boy's room
to surround himself with the things of a boy.
He tried on the boy's pajamas,
but they didn't fit. The boy walked in
and saw the man standing in the boy's
pajamas and asked the man,
"Why are you in the boy's clothes? Aren't you a man?"
"Yes," the man replied, "but I want to know
what it feels like to be a boy. What makes you a boy?"
"I don't know right from wrong," said the boy.
"But I've never *not* known right from wrong," the man stated.
"Maybe you've never been a boy," said the boy.

Confused, the man walked outside and saw
a giant redwood tree. He asked the tree,

As big and old as you are, do you remember
being just a small tree?

Yes.

What was it like?

I was shorter.

That's all?

Well, the wind was stronger, but I was closer to the ground.

So, do you think size is the only difference

between being a man and being a boy?

I don't know I'm just a tree.

Unsatisfied with nature's simplicity,
he walked on and came upon an assassin.

Do you like your job? the man asked the assassin.
You mean killing people?

Yes.

Well, yes, I do.

What do you like about it?

It takes hard work and lots of practice
to get to be as good as I am.

So there are good assassins and bad assassins?

I wouldn't put it that way. There are
boy assassins and man assassins.

So man is different from boy by experience?

Bulls-eye!

Self-assured and with a sigh of relief
the man walked on . . . when suddenly
a clown jumped out in front of him.

Boo! Ha ha ha ha! the clown laughed.

Why did you scare me?

Because you needed to laugh.

But how would scaring me make me laugh?

Isn't that how it works?

No, usually you're to be funny and then people laugh.

Oh, I hate being funny.

But you're a clown, that's what you're supposed to do:
be funny.

Yes, but it's too easy to be funny. Any boy can laugh
if I'm funny, but only a man can laugh when I'm scary.

But I didn't laugh.

That's because you're a boy.

And so the clown ducked back into the alleyway
leaving the man standing alone
looking like a lost boy.

Neil Diamante



Fani Anagnostou

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